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American Baptist Foreign Mission Society

LETTER SENT TO THE FRIENDS IN BURMA FROM THE BOARD
OF MANAGERS AND OFFICERS OF THE FOREIGN MISSION SO-
CIETY ON THE OCCASION OF THE JUDSON CENTENNIAL
CELEBRATION IN BURMA, DECEMBER TENTH TO TWENTY-
FIRST, NINETEEN HUNDRED AND THIRTEEN

PASTORS AND OTHERS WILL FIND THIS LETTER
OF VALUE IN PREPARING ADDRESSES IN CON-
NECTION WITH THE CENTENNIAL. . FOR DE-
TAILED STATISTICS OF THE CENTURY SEE THE
PAMPHLET ENTITLED "CENTENNIAL SURVEY, A
STORY OF BAPTIST ACHIEVEMENT."

Boston, October 27, 1913.

To the Friends Gathered at the Judson Centennial Celebration in Rangoon, to the Missionary Company in Burma and to the Churches among the Burmans, Karens, Kachins, Shans, Chins, Talains and other Peoples of Burma, the Board of Managers of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society extend hearty and fraternal greetings:

WE join with you in gratitude to God for the signal manifestations of Providence which summoned American Baptists to united missionary service a century ago, and which have conspicuously marked the period whose close we are now celebrating. While regretting that circumstances do not seem to make it expedient for any members of the Board or any of the present executive officers of the Society to be present at the celebration, we rejoice that there are a number of friends from America who have the interest and the leisure to visit Burma at this time and to participate with you in the centennial services. It is a source of peculiar satisfaction that we may have so admirable an official representative as Rev. Henry C. Mabie, D.D., whose many years of valued service as Home Secretary of the Society, whose acquaintance with the members of the missionary body and whose long study of and familiarity with the history and principles of missionary work fit him in a peculiar way for the service which he has been asked to render. It is our earnest prayer that the blessing of God may rest in an especial manner upon the services connected with your celebration and that the exceedingly interesting program that has been outlined may be carried through to the inspiration and uplift of all who may be privileged to attend. We envy you the opportunity you will enjoy in hearing from several still active members of the missionary force, in whose memory are treasured experiences of personal acquaintance with the founder of the mission, of the impressions made upon them by the personality of him for whom this centennial observance is named.

It is most fitting that this celebration should center about the name of Judson and that these commemorative exercises should be held in Burma, the country of his missionary labors, and particularly in Rangoon, the city to which he and his heroic wife came with such mingled feelings of fear and hope in the summer of 1813. Yet the celebration at once takes on a broader aspect. Adoniram and Ann Hasseltine Judson were the forerunners and types of the great company of courageous and consecrated men and women in whose spirits the missionary passion has burned and who have counted it their highest joy to give themselves as the representatives of the Baptist churches of America to the task of proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God not only in Burma but in South India, Bengal, Assam, China, Japan, Africa and the Philippine Islands. To their memory also we do honor at this time. Nor does the influence of these pioneers, whose coming to Burma you are now commemorating, end in the foreign mission enterprise. Every phase of our denominational activity, our very denominational life and unity themselves, owe to Judson and his associates a debt the magnitude of which it is impossible to compute. It is not too much to say that the remarkable growth of our denomination numerically and in social, moral and religious influence is traceable directly and in very large degree to the general and enthusiastic acceptance of the missionary responsibility as presented in the appeal of Judson for support. The organization and development of all of our great missionary societies, home and foreign, and of the Northern and Southern Baptist Conventions have been made possible by the spirit of cooperation which sprang up spontaneously in response to the challenge of Judson and Rice. This phase of their service will be more appropriately recognized in connection with the meeting of the Northern Baptist Convention next May, which will be the one hundredth anniversary of the formation of the first general organization of Baptists in America for any purpose, namely, the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America for Foreign Missions. But the significance of this celebration extends even beyond the limits of our own denomination. Baptists cannot lay exclusive claim to the forces set in operation by Adoniram Judson and others comprising the little groups of students at Williams and Andover. Not only the Congregationalists and Baptists but the whole Christian Church in the United States owes to them the quickening of its missionary conscience. It is fitting, therefore, that representatives of other denominational bodies as well as delegates from the other missions of our own Society should unite with you in Burma in this commemoration. We cannot fail to see in such an event a fine illustration of the fundamental oneness of the missionary enterprise in its purpose and spirit as well as in its divine leader.

There is abundant material for the deepening of our faith in the providential leading of God and the ultimate triumph of his purpose when we attempt to reproduce in thought the atmosphere out of which Adoniram Judson and his wife went forth on their missionary errand and the conditions into which they plunged on reaching the land that was to be the scene of their missionary life and labors. Only twenty years had elapsed since the beginning of the modern missionary era, through the influence of William Carey in England. The English Baptist Missionary Society and the London Missionary Society, representing the English Congregationalists, had been organized chiefly for work in portions of India under British control. Missionary interest was but slowly touching the life of the American churches. A few Congregational churches contributed support to the London Missionary Society, with which the American Board at first endeavored to effect some plan of cooperation for the support and conduct of the work of Judson, Nott and their associates. Scattered Baptist bodies had sent funds in small amounts to the English Baptist Missionary Society for the work inaugurated by Carey at Serampore, such gifts amounting in one year to as much as \$6,000. But this interest was sporadic and far from affecting the churches or church members as a whole in either denomination. It was an act of supreme faith on the part of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions to take the action which they did in 1811 after the return of Judson from conference with the London Missionary Society, in declaring "that this Board will retain under their care the young gentlemen who last year devoted themselves to the service of God for life as missionaries in foreign parts." It required, if possible, even greater faith when Adoniram Judson wrote from Calcutta to Dr. Bolles of Salem, after the change of conviction with regard to baptism which had made it necessary for him to withdraw from the service of the American Board: "Alone in this foreign heathen land, I make my appeal to those whom, with their permission, I will call my *Baptist brethren* in the United States." Both Mrs. Judson and later her husband on the occasions of their first return to America expressed profound gratification because of the marked increase in missionary interest which they found among the churches as compared with the conditions prevailing at the time of their departure in 1812.

The Baptists, to whom Judson addressed his appeal, while found in considerable numbers throughout the country, were financially weak and without the social standing which other religious bodies enjoyed because of the prominent part taken by them in the colonization and political development of certain sections. They boasted but few large or prosperous churches. In a total number of 2417 churches, the average membership was less than 75. The very organization of the churches, as well as the fact that they were so widely scattered, militated against intercommunication and united effort. It was to such a body that Adoniram Judson and his wife and Luther Rice turned for support in the enterprise upon which they had embarked.

The conditions which the Judsons faced on the field were certainly not more promising. Driven providentially to Burma in their effort to avoid enforced deportation to England at the hands of the British East India Company, they entered a land governed by a cruel and despotic Indian king whose arbitrary will was absolute and from whose displeasure no life was safe. Unlike Carey and his associates at Serampore and the German missionaries, Schwartz and Ziegenbalg, in Southern India, the Judsons began their missionary labors in a country practically untouched by the influences of civilization and placed themselves beyond the protection of even a nominally Christian government. The physical and spiritual atmosphere, which was to be the constant environment of their daily life, was such as to cast a gloom over even their courageous spirits. Of the impression made upon them as they landed in Rangoon, Mr. Judson wrote, "We had never before seen a place where European influence did not contribute to smooth and soften the rough features of uncultivated nature. The prospect of Rangoon, as we approached, was quite disheartening. I went on shore just at night to take a view of the place and the mission house, but so dark and cheerless and unpromising did all things appear that the evening of that day after my return to the ship we have marked as the most gloomy and distressing that we ever passed." After nearly a year of residence, Mrs. Judson wrote to Samuel Newell: "We have found the country, as we expected, in a most deplorable state, full of darkness, idolatry, and cruelty — full of commotion and uncertainty. We daily feel that the existence and perpetuity of this mission, still in an infant state, depends in a peculiar way on the interposing hand of Providence, and from this impression alone we are encouraged still to remain." It is not surprising, in view of these conditions and in the light of what we know of her own indomitable spirit, that we find Mrs. Judson writing a few months later: "God grant that we may live and die among the Burmans, though we should never do anything more than smooth the way for others." We do well to remember that it was not long after entering upon his work in such conditions as these and before the

first ray of light had come into the darkness that Judson wrote to Luther Rice: "If they ask what prospect of ultimate success there is, tell them as much as that there is an almighty and faithful God who will perform his promises."

It is manifestly impossible to review even briefly the missionary life and accomplishments of Dr. Judson during the nearly forty years of his service in Burma. It is fitting, however, that we give due recognition to the steadfastness of purpose, the keenness of intellect, the complete consecration, the sublime faith and the absolute dependence upon God which enabled Adoniram Judson in the divine providence to lay foundations which have stood the test of time and upon which has been erected a superstructure of outstanding significance in the history of missionary endeavor. Not least important in the work of Judson is the service rendered to all later missionaries and to the Burmese people themselves through his remarkable mastery of the Burmese language, attained in the face of extraordinary difficulties and with almost no assistance save that which he himself could derive from Burmese scholars. Two great monuments of the thoroughness of his knowledge and the intensity of his application remain in the Burman Bible and the Burmese dictionary, both in constant use to-day with relatively slight revision. We as a denomination and as a missionary society owe much also to Judson's conception and statement of the aim to be sought in the missionary enterprise. Francis Wayland says of the object which Judson always kept steadily in view: "It was not to teach men a creed or to train them to the performance of certain rites or to persuade them to belong to a particular church, but first of all to produce in them a radical and universal change of moral character, to lead them to repent all and forsake all sin, to love God with an affection that should transcend in power every other motive and to rely for salvation wholly on the merits of that atonement which has been made for man by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." This object and the means for securing it are well set forth in one of the "articles of agreement" drawn up and submitted to the Board at home by Judson and his first missionary associate, George H. Hough: "We agree in the opinion that our sole object on earth is to introduce the religion of Jesus Christ into the empire of Burma and that the means by which we hope to effect this are translating, printing and distributing the Holy Scriptures, preaching the gospel, circulating religious tracts and promoting the instruction of native children." To Judson we also owe one of the finest statements of the qualifications for missionary service dating from this early period of his work. He wrote to Luther Rice: "Humble, quiet, persevering men, men of sound and sterling talents (though perhaps not brilliant), of decent accomplishments and some natural aptitude to acquire a language, men of an amiable yielding temper, willing to take the lowest place, to be the least of all and the servants of all, men who enjoy much closet religion, leave all things to God and are willing to suffer all things for Christ's sake, without being proud of it,—these are the men, etc." And he adds: "But, oh, how unlike to this description is the writer of it."

Judson was primarily a missionary to the Burmans and for that race chiefly his direct personal work was done, yet by his sympathy and influence he belongs to all Burma and not to any single race or tribe. He himself in 1828 baptized the first convert from the Talains. Early in his missionary work he became deeply interested in the Karen people and made frequent missionary journeys into the jungles where they found their homes. He secured the release from slavery of Ko Thah Byu, the Karen apostle, and urged the sending of missionaries for work especially among that people, whose remarkable turning to Christianity is unique in missionary annals. When in later years the work was extended so as to include all of the other leading races of Burma, the Shans, Kachins, Chins, Talains, and more recently the Lahus, Was and other hill peoples of the far northeast, American Baptists were but entering into the heritage prepared for them by Judson and his early associates in the founding of the mission. Testimony must be borne to the wisdom and missionary statesmanship of those whose clear vision of the task and its needs led them to plant such institutions as the mission press, which under Cutter and Bennett took up a work begun by Hough in the very earliest period of the mission's life; the theological seminary for Burmans and other races speaking the Burmese language founded by Edward A. Stevens in 1838; the Karen Theological Seminary founded by J. G. Binney in 1846; and the Rangoon Baptist College, which also owes its inception to Dr. Binney; but more than all else those institutions which have become so deeply rooted in the life of the Christian community and which have within them the forces which will transform and ennoble that community, the Christian church and the village school. We covet for the higher institutions of learning the same strong support on the part of the Christian community and are deeply gratified with the evidences that these institutions, also, are being more and more recognized by the people as their own and as essential to their truest progress.

But in Judson's conception the scope of the missionary task transcended Burma with its many races. We find him as early as 1817 writing to the Corresponding Secretary in Boston in behalf of the extension of missionary work to Assam, China and Japan. And indeed a people ranking second in number among evangelical denominations in this country today cannot discharge its full missionary responsibility while limiting its labors to a single country with ten or twelve millions of people. Other claims have pressed for recognition. Other providences have led the way first into Assam, then into Telugu land, into Swatow and Ningpo, and far up the Yangtse River into West China, into Japan, into the Congo valley, and last of all, into the Philippine Islands. To these successive calls the Baptists of the North have responded until now the very length of our "far flung battle line" is almost a weakness because of the difficulty of making its impact strong and telling at every point.

Surely there is great reason for encouragement and hope in the progress of these hundred years. Work begun for a single race now touches nearly a score in Burma alone. Judson spent a lifetime in the mastery of a single language. His successors have translated the Scriptures or portions of them into all the leading tongues of Burma. Then, a slender foothold in the port city was secured with difficulty. Now, the entire land is dotted with mission stations reaching to the very borders of China on the north and northeast and of Assam on the northwest. Then, missionaries were in peril of their lives at the hands of arbitrary and cruel Burman princes, who refused absolutely to grant religious liberty to their subjects. Now, they are under the protection of a stable government and are recognized by the people as their friends and benefactors, and there is perfect freedom for the teaching and preaching of Christianity. Some very suggestive comparisons concerning the work in Burma are made by one who has been giving considerable study to the development of our work during the past century. As a point of comparison the year 1854 has been chosen, a date which marks the completion of forty years from the organization of the Society and corresponds nearly with the close of Dr. Judson's service. The number of missionaries had grown from four at the beginning of the work to sixty-two in 1854 and to 194 in 1913. Native workers who numbered 145 in 1854 have now reached a total of 2,126. Organized churches, of which there were none at the beginning and only 117 in 1854, now number 916, seventy-eight per cent. or 717 being self-supporting. The number of church members, amounting to 8,736 in 1854, now exceeds 65,000. The 55 schools reported in 1854 have increased to 708, and the number of pupils has multiplied from 1,728 to 26,235. Native contributions, of which no record was published in 1854, now amount to \$93,884 in a single year, while appropriations for the work of the mission have grown from \$43,780 in 1854 to \$249,962 in 1913. These figures are for Burma alone. Statistics for the entire work are no less encouraging. It is worthy of special note that the total membership reported in churches connected with the missions of this Society alone, numbering 159,920 according to the report of 1913, is only about 20,000 less than the total membership of Baptist churches in the United States at the time when Judson began his work in Burma. Surely, in these facts there is abundant reason to bow in gratitude to God that he has so richly blessed the faith and sacrifice of those through whose gifts of life and prayer and money these results have been achieved.

It is not our purpose on this occasion to engage in an extended discussion of mission policies. Two problems there are, however, to which the Board have given and are giving most earnest study, which they feel constrained to lay upon your hearts also, for their solution can be found only through the united thought and practical endeavor of all whom the problems touch. These problems are first, that of a shifting of emphasis from extensive to intensive methods of work, and second, that of the gradual transfer of responsibility for completion of the missionary task to the native Christian Church.

So rich has been the blessing poured out upon the efforts of the past, so rapid has been the development of work upon the field, especially in recent years, that the growth of resources — remarkable as it has been — is steadily less and less adequate to provide the necessary workers and equipment. The total receipts of the Society since its organization in 1814 have been \$29,231,302.14 of which almost exactly one-half has been received in the last sixteen years. Foreign field expenditures of the general Society alone, apart from the Woman's Societies, have grown from \$644,000 in 1908-09 to \$876,000 in 1912-13, an increase of over \$230,000 or thirty-six per cent. in five years. This increase, while far from representing what our churches are able to do and ought to do in the line of missionary endeavor, is truly extraordinary and full of encouragement. Nevertheless, in the face of this increase, the outstanding, unsupplied, urgent needs of the work in Burma as in every other field probably never were greater in number and never represented so large an aggregate expenditure. The adjustment of this inadequate supply to so tremendous a need is the problem which the Board is confronting today. A real solution demands more than simply

increasing the supply. Resources may be so directed that every need satisfied only creates new needs and greater and we become involved in a task which not only has no end but which becomes increasingly large and difficult with every step. The Board are persuaded that the true solution lies rather in making use of the resources, increased by every legitimate means to the largest possible amount, in such a way that they will multiply themselves, and that needs satisfied will give rise not simply to new needs but with these needs also will provide the means for their satisfaction.

The second problem is closely related to the first. Indeed, in its solution is to be found the greatest promise of solving the first. If Christian churches and a Christian community can be developed among the peoples of each mission field that will assume the responsibility for making Christianity dominant in their own land and will devote themselves with true Christian earnestness and loyalty to the discharge of that responsibility, the problems of occupation and evangelization will be comparatively easy of solution. The development and direction of such a force, however, calls for the creation of strong, intelligent and consecrated leadership among the native Christian body. It is this phase of the problem that commands particular attention just now, and because of its magnitude and urgency it challenges the wisest thought and the broadest experience of all who share in the missionary enterprise. The Board seek the fullest cooperation of the missionaries and the native Christian body in an endeavor to reach the best solution of these problems.

Each mission of the Society has its own inspiring history characterized by heroic and sacrificial service on the part of missionaries and native Christian disciples. Each presents its distinctive problems and its insistent needs. Each justly claims its own large place in the sympathy and support of our Baptist churches of the North. But today our hearts turn with a peculiar yearning, strong and tender, toward Burma, the eldest child of our missionary fervor. We take a peculiar satisfaction in reviewing the triumphs of the gospel in that land and the unmistakable manifestations of Providence which have repeatedly marked the work of the one hundred years that have elapsed since the coming of Judson to Rangoon. It is almost commonplace to say that the missionary enterprise which found its beginning in the devotion of life on the part of Adoniram Judson and his companions and in the sacrificial giving of means by the scattered and for the most part humble followers of the Master in this country was born of prayer and faith, but those words take on a new and richer meaning as we trace their marvelous results step by step down through the century. If the history of this one hundred years means anything to us today, it should constitute an irresistible call to a faith and vision no less strong and far-reaching and to a spirit of prayer no less effectual and pervasive than that which characterized the founders of American Baptist missions. For such a spirit of faith and prayer the records of the past yield strong grounds for confidence; the conditions and the problems of the present are rich with opportunity and promise. In this spirit, we pledge to you on behalf of the churches of America our earnest sympathy and support as you enter upon the new century which we trust may in the providence of God see the realization of that vision which drew Adoniram and Ann Hasseltine Judson to the shores of Burma one hundred years ago.

With warmest Christian regards,

EMORY W. HUNT
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Home Secretary
JAMES H. FRANKLIN
Foreign Secretary
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